

# Supporting Client Outcomes

Our Goal: Continuously improve the organization's capacity to achieve excellent outcomes for children and families.

Over the past 10 years, the number of children in out-of-home-care has increased from less than 8,000 to more than 10,000 annually.

During that time, the number of licensed homes available to care for children has been steadily decreasing.

In 2007 the national group AdoptUSKids offered professional consultation services to states wishing to improve foster care recruitment efforts. Beginning in the summer of 2007, foster parents, private agencies, CA staff, marketing professionals and a DSHS design team began working on a new targeted approach to foster care recruitment. The consultants helped Washington state staff identify key information that would inform future directed recruitment efforts. This information included answers to the following:

- From which communities are the greatest numbers of children removed from their homes and placed into out-of-home care?
- What are the profiles of "successful" foster parents?
- How can we reach potential foster parents whose demographic and behavioral characteristics match those of our successful foster parents in the communities where they are most needed?

Successful foster parents were those who met the following criteria:

- Had been licensed a minimum of three years.

- Had gone through the renewal process at least once.
- Currently had at least one child in care.

During Fiscal Year 2008, Children's Administration, with the help of national experts and community partners, launched a new statewide foster care recruitment campaign called Foster Parenting...You can too.

More than 1,000 people made suggestions for a potential brand and tagline that would be "upbeat," "engaging," "culturally competent," "gender neutral," and "compelling."

The goal of this new campaign is to increase the number of newly licensed homes by five percent per year in an effort to increase the resources available to care for children.



Communities have taken the new brand and made it their own. It has been seen all over the state at events and public venues, including: highway overpasses, newsletters, calendars, banners, baseball outfield fences, school reader boards, newspapers, on the sides of cars and vans, tee shirts, ball caps, tote bags, and, yes, in the arms of a life-sized (presumably) Sasquatch!

This new campaign has united and energized child welfare champions throughout the entire state in a mission to bring caring and compassionate adults forward to care for and nurture amazing, resilient children.

# Supporting Client Outcomes Overview

Children's Administration strives to ensure that children who must be cared for by someone other than their parents or family members are provided the most safe, stable, and nurturing environment possible.

CA carefully screens all prospective foster parents and evaluates the homes in which they live to ensure that they are safe and afford adequate personal space for each child placed.

The Administration tracks licensed resources available to care for children through the following measures:

- Licensed foster homes available for children.
- Availability of minority foster homes.
- Foster care licensing applications that take more than 90 days to complete.



**OBJECTIVE:**

Adequate, quality resources are available for foster care, behavior rehabilitation services, and adoption

**MEASURED BY:**

Licensed foster homes available for children

There is a precarious balance between the need to continually secure more foster homes as quickly as possible and to ensure that each and every one of those homes and the people living in them are suitable caregivers.

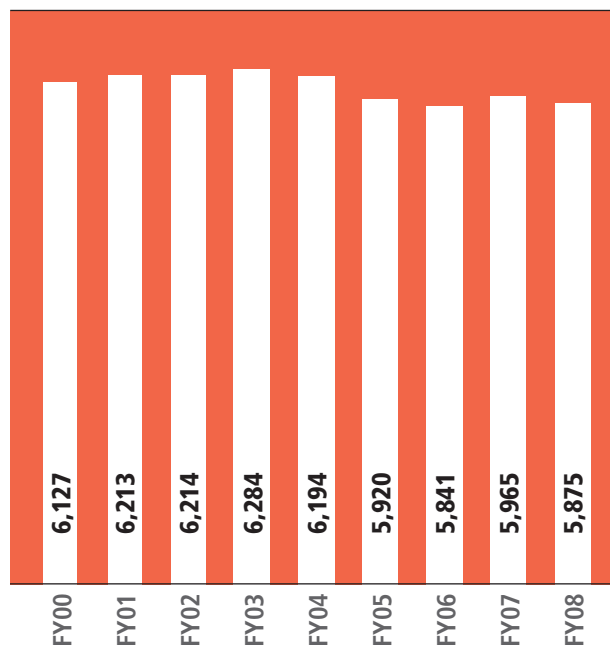
Child safety is paramount in every endeavor. The decision to become a foster parent is not taken lightly nor is the process immediate or without some effort.

Potential foster parents must attend training, undergo detailed background checks, undergo a home study and meet a variety of legally mandated licensing standards. All of these standards take considerable time and effort to meet. It takes commitment to foster parenting to see the process all the way through.

The Administration has made recent efforts to support those dedicated caregivers in successfully completing the licensing process and to retain foster parents once they are licensed. Recruitment and retention efforts require ongoing commitment and creativity so that we can take better care of those who take care of our children.

The total number of licensed homes in Washington state has been between 5,800 and 6,300 throughout the measurement period displayed.

**Number of Total Licensed Foster Homes\***



\*Number of Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) and private agency foster homes licensed to provide care as of the end of the fiscal year. Source: September 2008 CAMIS download.

**OBJECTIVE:**

Adequate quality resources are available for foster care, behavior rehabilitation services, and adoption

**MEASURED BY:**

Availability of minority foster homes

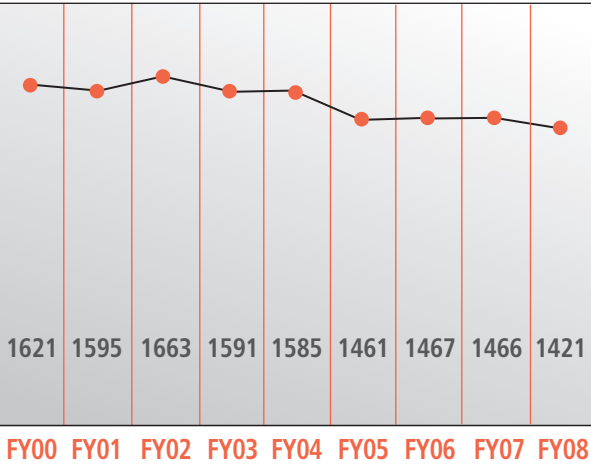
Any efforts to help children experience a sense of familiarity and validation in foster care goes far to help those children quickly stabilize and thrive even in uncertain circumstances.

A common language, familiar scents and flavors, books and art work with images that look like the children placed, all help children experience a stronger sense of self and attachment to those around them.

The Administration continues to work toward identifying and licensing substitute caregivers reflective of the child population in our care.

As the numbers of African American and Native American children in out-of-home care have increased, the number of African American and Native American homes licensed to care for them have decreased. The Administration has initiatives currently underway to both address the disproportionately high numbers of African American and Native American children in care and to increase the number of African American and Native American homes available to more adequately meet the care and cultural needs of children of color.

Total Number of Foster Homes Available\*



\*Number of Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) and Private Agency minority foster homes licensed to provide care. Source: September 2008 CAMIS download.

**OBJECTIVE:**

Adequate, quality resources are available for foster care, behavior rehabilitation services, and adoption

**MEASURED BY:**

Foster homes that take more than 90 days to fully license

Those families who are dedicated to becoming foster parents must attend training, become first aid and CPR certified, pass background checks, and their homes must meet a variety of legally mandated licensing standards.

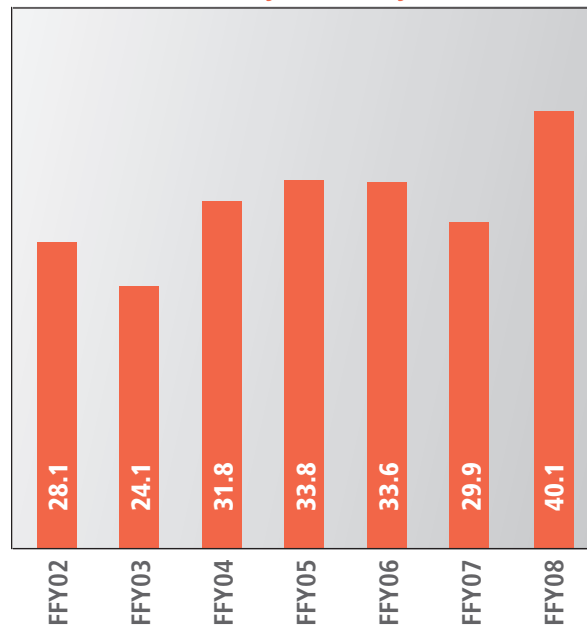
While the Administration strives to fully license foster homes as quickly as possible, it often takes time to accomplish all of the tasks necessary to become licensed. Even when everyone is working as quickly as possible, there are sometimes unforeseen barriers that slow the process.

The Centralized Background Check Unit carefully screens every background check application. As the number of background inquiries fluctuates, there is often a backlog of background checks in various stages of completion.

Moreover, the Administration is willing to err on the side of caution when it comes to licensing caregivers to shelter and nurture abused and neglected children. When it comes to choosing between licensing quickly or thoroughly screening, CA will opt for a more thorough and lengthy screening process.



Percentage of Foster Homes that Took More than 90 Days to Fully License\*



\*Percentage of fully licensed foster homes for whom it took longer than 90 days for a full license to be issued. Source: September 2008 CAMIS download.